

## **BIBHB 604X: JONAH & RUTH**

Spring 2023/Mondays 6: 30-9:30/Synchronous Online

Instructor: Julie Duncan

Draft

### **Description/Goals**

- 1) To gain familiarity with these two short stories, their theological themes, and the major critical issues posed.
- 2) To develop skills in close reading.
- 3) To become better acquainted with features of Hebrew narrative style.
- 4) To gain proficiency in reading and assessing scholarly positions on critical issues, and to gain confidence in dialoguing with the “experts.”
- 5) To reinforce knowledge acquired in the introductory Hebrew Bible course (major theological themes, genres, etc.).
- 6) To become aware of how critical issues may be intertwined with theological questions, and to work on seeing the ramifications.

Finally, it is hoped that you will leave the course feeling a greater appreciation for the beauty and complexity of Ruth and Jonah, as well as some degree of confidence about teaching and preaching these two stories.

### **Format**

Text assignments should be prepared using the commentaries as an orientation point, along with the secondary resources listed on the daily schedule.

### **REQUIREMENTS:**

- 1) One exegesis paper, 11-13 pages in length (2,750 to 3,250 words) from either Ruth or Jonah (*due 5/13\**). (30 %)
- 2) Participation includes the following:
  - a) Regular attendance (5%)
  - b) Thoughtful participation in class discussions, reflecting familiarity with the biblical text and assigned reading, including your preparation of the weekly study guide (distributed in advance). (35%)
  - c) Two reports on an essay, commentator perspective, or designated segment of the study questions, one from Ruth and one from Jonah. These should be 20-30 minutes in length, depending on the material; allow an additional 15 minutes for discussion. (15 % each). (*Guidelines for reports will be posted on course site.*)

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\* Senior papers due Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> -2 pm. Early submissions appreciated.

### **Additional Notes:**

- 1) Required Readings that are not in the required textbooks will be available on the course site.
- 2) Alternative projects (such as a thematic paper) may be proposed in lieu of an exegetical paper. Please see instructor to make arrangements.

### **BOOKS FOR RUTH**

#### **Required:**

Katherine Doob Sakenfeld. *Ruth*. Interpretation Series. Louisville; Westminster, 2011.  
ISBN: 978-0-8042-3149-7. Price: \$25.00@booksamillion.com  
Hardcover (recommended) available for \$25.00 and less at Amazon.com.  
Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.  
ISBN: 978-0-8006-0464-6. Price: \$19.89 at Amazon.com

#### **Additional Resources for Ruth:**

Bush, Frederick. *Ruth, Esther*. Word Biblical Commentary. Word Books, 1996.  
\*Eshkenazi, Tamara and Tikva Frymer Kenski. *Ruth*. JPS Bible Commentary. Philadelphia: JPS Publication Society, 2011.  
\*Fentress-Williams, Judy. *Ruth*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2012.  
Fewell, Dana and David Gunn. *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990.  
Hubbard, R. L. *Ruth*. New International Commentary. Eerdmans, 1988.  
Kalmanofsky, Amy. *Dangerous Sisters of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.  
Kates, Judith and Gail Twersky Reimer, eds. *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim A Sacred Story* : New York: Random House, 1994.  
LaCoque, Andre. *Ruth*. Continental Series. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004.  
\*Linafelt, Todd and Timothy Beal. *Ruth and Esther*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999.  
McKeown, James. *Ruth*. The Two Horizons Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.  
Schipper, Jeremy. *Ruth*. Anchor Yale Bible. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.  
Katherine Sakenfeld. *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today*. Westminster, 2003.  
Spina, Frank. *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.  
West, Mona. "Ruth" in *The Queer Bible Commentary*, edited by Deryn Guest et al. London: SCM Press, 2006.

## BOOKS FOR JONAH

### Required:

James Limburg. *Jonah*. Old Testament Library. Westminster/John Knox, 1993.  
ISBN: 0-664-21296-4. Price: \$23.94 at Amazon.com

### Supplementary commentary for Jonah (if budget allows):

Philip P. Jenson. *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah: A Theological Commentary*. T & T Clark, 2008. ISBN: 567-04222-7. Price (used) 93.00 at Amazon.com

### OR:

Uriel Simon. *Jonah*. The JPS Bible Commentary. Jewish Publication Society, 1999.  
ISBN: 0-8276-0672-9. Price (used) \$26.00 – 29.00 at Amazon.com

### Additional Resources for Jonah:

Allen, Leslie. *Joel, Obadiah, Micah, and Jonah*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975.

Ben Zvi, Ehud. *Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2009.

Erickson, Amy. *Jonah: Introduction and Commentary*. Illuminations Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.

Friedemann Golka. *Revelation of God: A Commentary on the Books of Song of Songs and Jonah*. International Theological Commentary. Eerdmans, 1988.

Roop, Eugene. *Ruth, Jonah, Esther*. Believers Church Bible Commentary. Herald Press, 2003.

Spina, Frank. *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.

Tiemeyer, Lena-Sofia. *Jonah Through the Centuries*. Blackwell Commentaries. Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2021.

Wolff, Hans. *Obadiah and Jonah*. Augsburg Press, 1986.

## Schedule of Readings – Ruth

*Note: Reports and student-led discussions are marked in boldface or by an asterisk.*

**Mon 1/30** Introduction/Orientation.  
(Please read all four chapters of Ruth before Feb. 6)

*Reading on narrative:* Eric Barreto and Michael Chan, *Exploring the Bible* (c. 13) “How Do We Read Narratives?” (pp.87-94). Available on course site

**Mon 2/6** Text: Ruth 1 and Genesis 38

Phyllis Trible, "A Human Comedy" in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 166-175.

K. Sakenfeld, 17-36.

D. Fewell, and D. Gunn, *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth*, 69-76. (Available on course site.)

Supplementary Bibliography:

Angela Wai Ching Wong, "History, Identity and a Community of Hesus: A Biblical Reflection on Ruth 1:1-17." *Asia Journal of Theology* 13 (1999) 3-13.

Mark S. Smith, "Your People Shall Be My People: Family and Covenant in Ruth 1:16-17" *CBQ* 69 (2007) 242-258.

Nehama Aschkenasy, "Language as Female Empowerment in Ruth," in *Reading Ruth: Contemporary Women Reclaim a Sacred Story*, eds. Judith Kates and Gail Twersky Reimer, pp. 111-124, esp. 111-117.

D. F. Rauber, "Literary Values in the Bible: The Book of Ruth" *JBL* 89 (1970) 27-37.

Judith Fentress-Williams, *Ruth* (introductory sections, pp. 13-30).

**Mon 2/13** Text: Ruth 2

Sakenfeld, 1-16 (Introduction).

Sakenfeld, 37-50.

Trible, "Human Comedy," 176-181.

**Report:** Timothy Stone, "Six Measures of Barley: Seed Symbolism in Ruth," *JSOT* 38.2 (2013) 189-199. Available on course site

Supplementary Bibliography:

Fewell and Gunn, *Compromising Redemption*, 34-45.

Dalila Nayap-Pot, "Life in the Midst of Death: Naomi, Ruth and the Plight of Indigenous Women" in *Vernacular Hermeneutics*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah, 52-65. Sheffield Press, 1999.

Michael Moore, "Ruth the Moabite and the Blessings of Foreigners," *CBQ* 60 (2001) 203-217.

**Mon 2/20** Text: Ruth 3

Sakenfeld, 51-66.

Trible, 181-187.

Eunny Lee, "Ruth" in *Women's Bible Commentary* (Third Edition, 2012) 141-149 (esp. 147-148). Available on course site.

**Report:** Dana Fewell, David Gunn, "Boaz, Pillar of Society: Measures of Worth in the Book of Ruth," *JSOT* 45 (1989) 45-54. Available on course site

Supplementary Bibliography:

James Black, "Ruth in the Dark: Folktale, Law and Creative Ambiguity in the Old Testament" *Journal of Literature and Theology* 5 (1991) 20-35.

Anna May Say Pa, "Reading Ruth 3:1-5 from an Asian Woman's Perspective," in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*, ed. L. Day and C. Pressler, 89-101. Louisville, 2006.

Kirsten Nielsen, *Ruth: A Commentary*, 66-76.

**Mon 2/27** Text: Ruth 4 \**Student led discussion based on Study Guide.*

Sakenfeld, 67-88.

Trible, 188-196.

(Review) D. Fewell, D. Gunn, "Boaz, Pillar of Society: Measures of Worth in the Book of Ruth," *JSOT* 45 (1989) 45-54, especially pages 50-54.

**Supplementary Resource** (available on course site; commentary on reserve):

Tamara Eshkenazi and Tikva Frymer Kenski, *Ruth* (JPS Bible Commentary) 69-92 (Ruth 4).<sup>1</sup>

Supplementary Bibliography:

Barbara Green, "The Plot of the Biblical Story of Ruth," *JSOT* 23 (1982) 55-68.

Eunny Lee, "Ruth" in *Women's Bible Commentary* (Third Edition, 2012) 142-149. Available on course site

J. A. Loader, "A Woman Praised by Women is Better than a Woman Praised by Seven Men," *Theological Studies* Vol. 60 (2009) 687-710. On course site

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<sup>1</sup> Focus on their summary sections: 69-70 (*Redemption and Restoration*); 86 (*Betrothal, Birth, and Blessings*); 92-94 (*Reweaving the Web of Life – The Concluding Genealogy*).

Madipoane Masenya. "Ngwetsi (Bride): The Naomi-Ruth Story from an African-South African Woman's Perspective." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 14 (1998) 81-90. Available on course site

Victor Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity in the Story of Ruth," *The Family in Life and in Death: The Family in Ancient Israel*, ed. Patricia Dutcher-Walls, 17-27. Available on course site

Mona West, "Ruth," *The Queer Bible Commentary*, ed. Deryn Guest, 190-194. SCM Press, 2006. Available on course site

### **Mon 3/6** Overview – Approaches/Interpretations- Ruth

Sakenfeld, *Ruth*, 86 -88 ("Hermeneutical and Theological Postscript").

***Reports may be chosen from the following:*** (Available on course site.)

Yolanda Norton, "Silenced Struggles for Survival: Finding Life in Death in the Book of Ruth," *I Found God in Me: A Womanist Biblical Hermeneutics Reader*, ed. Mitzi J. Smith, 266-280. Wipf and Stock, 2015.

Eunny Lee, "Ruth the Moabite: Identity, Kinship, and Otherness," in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*, ed. L. Day and C. Pressler, 89-101. Louisville, 2006.

Katherine Sakenfeld, "Ruth and Naomi: Economic Survival and Family Values," in *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today*.

Fokkelen Van Dijk-Hemmes, "Ruth: A Product of Women's Culture?" *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* (First Series; 1993) ed. A. Brenner, 134-139.

Judy Fentress-Williams, "Ruth" selected sections from her introduction (25-34).

Ilana Pardes, "The Book of Ruth: Idyllic Revisionism," in *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach*, 98-117. Harvard University Press, 1992.

Supplementary Bibliography: <sup>2</sup>

Rachel Adelman, "Seduction and Recognition in the Story of Judah and Tamar and the Book of Ruth." *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues*. No. 23. Spring-Fall 2012) 87-109.

Athalya Brenner, *A Feminist Companion to Ruth* (First Series, 1993) 9-16 (Introduction).

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<sup>2</sup> Entries marked with an asterisk are additional possibilities for oral reports.

Jennifer Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth: A Biblical Heroine and Her Afterlives*.  
University of South Carolina, 2011.

Peter Lau and Jione Havea, eds. *Reading Ruth in Asia*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015.

Julie Li-Chuan. "Returning Home: The Inspiration of the Role Redifferentiation  
in the Book of Ruth for Taiwanese Women." *Semeia* 78 (1997) 47-53.

\*J. A. Loader, "A Woman Praised by Women is Better than a Woman Praised by Seven  
Men." *Theological Studies*, Vol. 60, Issue 3, 2009 (687-701). Available on course site.

\*Victor Matthews, "The Determination of Social Identity in the Story of Ruth,"  
in *The Family in Life and in Death: The Family in Ancient Israel*, ed. Patricia Dutcher-  
Walls, 17-27. T&T Clark, 2009. Available on course site.

Carol Meyers, "'Women of the Neighborhood' (Ruth 4:17): Informal Female Networks  
in Ancient Israel," *A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther* (Second Series, 1999), ed.  
A. Brenner, 110-127.

Sarojini Nadar, "A South African Indian Womanist Reading of the Character of  
Ruth," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, ed. Musa Dube, 159-  
175. Society of Biblical Literature, 2001.

Ilana Pardes, "Rachel's Dream: The Female Subplot" in *Countertraditions  
in the Bible: A Feminist Approach*, 98-117. Harvard University, 1992.

K. Sakenfeld, "The Story of Ruth: Economic Survival," *Realia Dei: Essays in  
Archeology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. P. H. Williams and T. Hiebert.

Renita Weems, "Blessed Be the Tie That Binds (Naomi and Ruth)," *Just a Sister  
Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible*, 23-38.  
New York; Warner, 2005.

Mona West, "Ruth," in *The Queer Bible Commentary*, ed. Deryn Guest et al., 190-  
194. SCM Press, 2006. Available on course site.

Gale Yee, "Ruth the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority," in *They Were All  
Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, ed. R. Bailey, T. Liew, F.  
Segovia, 119-134. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.

**Mon 3/13**

***Reading/Research Day***

## Schedule of Readings: Jonah

**Mon 3/20** Introduction:  
Limburg, 19-36.

Texts: Jonah 1 and 2 Kings 14:23-27  
Jonah 4:10-11

Limburg, 37-59.

P. Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah Micah*, 41-57 (Jonah 1). Available on course site

J. Holbert, "Deliverance Belongs to Yahweh: Satire in the Book of Jonah," *JSOT* 21(1981) 59-74 (read up to page 70). Available on course site

### Supplementary Bibliography:

Nan Jou Chen, "Jonah," in *Global Bible Commentary*, ed. Daniel Patte et al., 291-294. Nashville: Abingdon, 2004. Available on course site

P. Jenson, *Obadiah Jonah, Micah*, 31-35 (*The Genre of the Book*). On course site

**Mon 3/27** Text: Jonah 2

Limburg, 60-72.

J. Holbert (*cont.*), "Deliverance Belongs to Yahweh," read 70-74.

J. Ackerman, "Satire and Symbolism in the Song of Jonah," in *Traditions in Transformation*, ed. B. Halpern (1981) read pages 213-217.  
(Available on course site.)

**Report:** J. Holbert "Deliverance Belongs to Yahweh: Satire in the Book of Jonah," *JSOT* 21 (1981) 59-74.

### Supplementary Bibliography:

J. Ackerman, "Satire and Symbolism in the Song of Jonah," in *Traditions in Transformation*, ed. B. Halpern (1981) 213-246.

Phyllis Tribble, Jonah 2, *New Interpreters Bible*, Vol. VII.

J. Magonet, "Jonah" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.

G. Landes, "The Kerygma of the Book of Jonah" *Interpretation* 21 (1967) 3-31.

**Mon 4/3 and 4/10**

Spring Break



**Mon 4/17**                      Text: Jonah 3

Limburg, 74-88.

Johanna van Wijk-Bos, "The Overturning of Nineveh in the Third Chapter of Jonah," *On the Way to Nineveh*, 218-236. Available on course site

Additional Resources:

Uriel Simon, *Jonah 3* (JPS Commentary) 25-34. Available on course site

Supplementary Bibliography:

R.W.L. Moberly, "Preaching for a Response? Jonah's Message to the Ninevites Reconsidered." *Vetus Testamentum* 53 (2003) 156-168.

Shimon Bakon, "Jonah: The Conscientious Objector," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 37 (2009) 95-102.

J. Magonet, "Jonah" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.

**Mon 4/24**                      [*Jonah*] is a peculiar combination of life force and death wish.  
*Elie Wiesel, Five Biblical Portraits.*

Text: Jonah 4                      **\*Student led discussion based on study guide.**

Limburg, 88-98.

Review: J. Ackerman, *Satire and Symbolism*, 217 (his compact summary of the story) and 245 (for his summation of the primary issue).  
Available on course site

Additional Resource: Uriel Simon, *Jonah 4* (JPS Commentary) 34-48.  
Available on course site. Supplement with his introductory remarks on pp. xii-xiii.

Supplementary Bibliography:

Philip Jenson, *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah*, 80-93 (Jonah 4).

Frank Spina, "Jonah: Prophet Among, To, and Against Outsiders" in *Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story*

Uriel Simon, *Jonah 4* (JPS Commentary) 34-48 (supplement with introductory remarks on pp. xii-xiii). Available on course site

**Mon 5/1** Overview – Approaches/ Interpretations –Jonah

Reread Jonah 4:9-11.

Review: Limburg, 33-36 (Theological Themes in Jonah).

Maya Bernstein, “Why Do We Read Jonah During the Minchah Service on Yom Kippur?” September, 2009. (Available on course site.)

Film clip: “Retelling Jonah.”

***Reports may be chosen from the following:*** (Available on course site)

Yael Shemesh, “ ‘And Many Beasts’ (Jonah 4:11): The Function and Status of Animals in the Book of Jonah.” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 10/6 (2010) 2-25.

Barbara Green, “Beyond Messages: How Meaning Emerges from our Reading of Jonah,” *Word and World* 27 (2), Spring 2007 (149-156).

Shimon Bakon, “Jonah: The Conscientious Objector,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 37 (2009) 95-102.

Marsha White, “Jonah” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*. Expanded Edition. Edited by Carol Newsom et al., 321-325. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.

\*The role of Jonah in Jewish liturgical tradition: The reading of Jonah on Yom Kippur. (*see resources listed below*):

*Jonah and Yom Kippur – Resources*

Phyllis Tribble, “Jonah,” NIB VII (p. 528). Available on course site  
(A compact but informative summary on reading of Jonah at *Yom Kippur*.)

Nahum Sarna, “Why the Book of Jonah is Read on *Yom Kippur*.” *Biblical Review* 6 (1990) 24. Available on course site

Maya Bernstein, “Why Do We Read Jonah During the Minchah Service on Yom Kippur?” September 2009. Available on course site

**Supplementary Bibliography:**

- Ben Zvi, Ehud. *Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Yehud*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2009.
- Chesung, Justin Ryu. "Silence as Resistance: A Postcolonial Reading of the Silence of Jonah in Jonah 4:1-11," *JSOT* 34 (2009) 195-218.
- De La Torre, Miguel. *Liberating Jonah: Forming an Ethics of Reconciliation*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2007.
- Frahm, Eckart. "Of Doves, Fish, and Goddesses: Reflections on the Literary, Religious, and Historical Background of the Book of Jonah," in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, edited by Joel Baden et al., 432-450. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- Gaines, Janet. *Forgiveness in a Wounded World: Jonah's Dilemma*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Jenson, Philip. "Interpreting Jonah's God," in *The God of Israel*, edited by R.P. Gordon, 229-245. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Magonet, Jonathan. *Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah*. Bern: Herbert Lang, 1976.
- Murphy, Kelly. "Jonah" in *Women's Bible Commentary*. Third Edition. Edited by Carol Newsom et al., 321-325. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012.
- \*Person, Raymond. "The Role of Non-Human Characters in Jonah," in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, edited by N. Habel and P. Trudinger, 85-90. Society of Biblical Literature, 2008.
- Perry, T.A. *The Honeymoon is Over: Jonah's Argument with God*. Hendrickson Publishers, 2006.
- Sherwood, Yvonne. *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Sherwood, Yvonne. "Cross-currents in the Book of Jonah: Some Jewish and Cultural Midrashim on a Traditional Text." *Biblical Interpretation* 6 (1998) 49-79.
- Smith-Christopher, D.L. "Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation and inclusion of the 'Foreigner' in Post-Exilic Biblical Theology," *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett, 117-142 (1996).
- \*Van Heerden, Willie. "Ecological Interpretations of the Jonah Narrative – Have They Succeeded in Overcoming Anthropocentrism?" *Journal for Semitics* 23 (2014) 114-34.
- \*Whedbee, J.W. "Jonah as Joke: A Comedy of Contradiction, Caricature, and Compassion," in *The Bible and the Comic Vision*, 191-220. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- White, Marsha. "Jonah" in *Women's Bible Commentary*. Expanded Edition. Edited by Carol Newsom et al., 321-325. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.
- Zornberg, Avivah Gottlieb. "Jonah: A Fantasy of Flight." *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 18 (2008) 271-99 (2009).
- \*———. *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconscious*. Schocken Press, 2011.

**Mon 5/8**                    *All degree requirements met and all holds cleared for Commencement Participation.*

**Wed 5/13**                *Jonah and Ruth Papers due for all other students*